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IN JANUARY 1959, PHASE I OF THE TEXAS SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT WAS UNDERTAKEN TO (1) OFFER AN INCREASED VARIETY OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES, (2) INITIATE MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT, (3) INDIVIDUALIZE INSTRUCTION, AND (4) STRENGTHEN GUIDANCE AND TESTING PROGRAMS. DURING PHASE II, TO BEGIN IN 1960, SEVERAL SMALL TWELVE-GRADE SCHOOLS WILL BE SELECTED IN EACH OF 5 REGIONS THROUGHOUT THE STATE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM. A COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED IN EACH OF THE 5 REGIONS WILL STUDY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND EVALUATE THE ENTIRE SCHOOL PROGRAM, EMPLOYING IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS. SOME TECHNIQUES WHICH COULD BE INTRODUCED INTO THESE SMALL SCHOOLS INCLUDE--(1) MULTIPLE CLASSES TO MORE ADEQUATELY UTILIZE SMALL GROUP STUDY CONDITIONS, (2) SUPERVISED CORRESPONDENCE STUDY TO COMPENSATE FOR RESTRICTED COURSE OFFERINGS, (3) COOPERATIVE SERVICE PROGRAMS BETWEEN SCHOOLS WHEREBY TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS, AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS MAY BE SHARED TO PROVIDE INCREASED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, (4) SCHOOL AIDES TO RELIEVE TEACHERS FROM TASKS THAT COULD BE PERFORMED BY NON CERTIFIED PERSONNEL, (5) FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES TO OPTIMIZE LEARNING TIME DURING THE SCHOOL DAY, AND (6) AUDIOVISUAL AIDS AND MATERIALS TO SUPPLEMENT TEACHER PRESENTATIONS. PROPOSED EVALUATION WILL CONSIST OF BASE LINE SURVEY DATA AND PROGRAM EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS DURING THE FIRST YEAR. (DA)

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TEXAS SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

1960

SPONSORED BY:

The Texas Small Schools Association, and
The Texas Education Agency

RC000 213

TEXAS SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

"The Story in Brief"

GOALS

- Improvement of the Quality of the Instructional Program
- Development of New Methods and Techniques of Teaching
- Broaden Course Offerings
- Increase Professional Competencies of Administrator and Staff

TECHNIQUES TO BE EXPLORED

- Multiple Classes
- Supervised Correspondence Study
- Cooperative Services
- School Aides
- Flexible Schedules
- Audio-Visual and Other Materials

PROCEDURES

- Survey of Existing Programs
- Experimentation through the use of New or Different Ways of Organizing the School Program
- Coordinated Services Shared by Several Schools
- Preparation of Special Materials
- Evaluation

A CHRONOLOGY OF PAST EVENTS AND PROJECTED PLANS

The Texas Small Schools Project has been under way since January, 1959. After a year of exploratory study, it has gained momentum from the enthusiasm of those associated with it--small school superintendents, the Commissioner of Education, the Texas Education Agency staff, and others. In the pages which follow, there is presented an overview, or outline, of what has occurred to date and a plan for pursuing this study vigorously for the next five years.

In brief, the plan outlines a five-phased study as follows:

Phase I - Exploration, 1959-60

Phase II - Planning an Experimental Program, Spring, 1960

Phase III - Implementing the Program, 1960-63

Phase IV - Evaluating the Results, 1961-64

Phase V - Seeking Wide-Spread Change, 1963-65

Phase I - Exploration (1959-60)

January, 1959. Small school superintendents expressed interest in studying special problems of small schools.

February, 1959. Small Schools Advisory Commission appointed.

April, 1959. District meetings on small school problems held throughout the state.

Summer, 1959. Workshops on Curriculum Studies and Staff Utilization Studies held at the University of Texas.

Fall, 1959. Small Schools Advisory Commission continues study of small school problems.

Texas Education Agency sends delegation to study Rocky Mountain Area and Catskill Area Projects.

January, 1960. Small school administrators meet to consider possible programs for improving small schools.

Phase II - Planning an Experimental Program (Spring, 1960)

February, 1960. Agency staff and advisors draft preliminary plans for an experimental program.

Preliminary plans are reviewed with Small Schools Advisory Commission, college and university staff members, directors of the Texas Small Schools Association, and Consultant to the Fund for the Advancement of Education.

March, 1960. Plans revised by Agency staff and selected advisors, General structure of the experimental program is detailed in terms of scope of program, major objectives, and techniques of evaluation. Specific features of the design remain flexible for reshaping in cooperation with personnel of participating schools.

April, 1960. Proposed experimental program presented to interested groups of school officials, teachers, and civic leaders in small school area meetings. Criticisms, points of view, suggestions, and expressions of willingness to participate in the program will be received.

May, 1960. Design and planning of the general program structure completed by Agency staff and advisors. Participating school districts selected from among those that volunteer.

June, 1960. Summer workshop for personnel of participating schools will be held at The University of Texas. This workshop deals with planning in detail the implementation of experimental practices in local small schools.

Phase III - Implementing the Program (1960-64)

(To be developed. Could include sugh things as community surveys, evaluating existing programs, revamping programs, developing intensive in-service education activities, and arranging for supervisory and specialized services.)

Phase IV - Evaluating Results (1961-64)

(To be developed. Could include extensive testing, self-evaluation, visiting evaluation teams, community surveys, and comparative studies of other non-experimental schools.)

Phase V - Seeking Wide-Spread Change (1963-65)

To be developed. Could include proposals for legislation, revised accreditation standards, State Board of Education Regulations, and publication of reports in technical and professional journals. Preparation of visual aids for presenting the findings of the project to interested professional and lay groups. The organization of a small school improvement service team to aid interested small schools in making desirable changes.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

Major Goals

A. To test the effectiveness of a cooperative study program in school improvement as a means of developing more comprehensive high quality instructional programs by

- Increasing the variety of educational experiences offered students
- Developing methods and techniques of teaching which will insure a better education by giving special attention to individual students' abilities, needs, and interests
- Using more effectively the staff and existing buildings and equipment
- Providing stronger guidance and testing programs

B. To further test the feasibility of promising practices for improving the quality of education in small schools by

- Increasing the professional competencies of administrators and staff
- Improved use of teachers' time and talents
- Organizing for shared services of a variety of kinds
- Teacher recruitment, training, and retention.

Assumptions

This project is designed with certain assumptions in mind:

A. Many small schools will continue to exist in the foreseeable future.

B. Students in small schools have the right to expect educational opportunities comparable with those offered other students in Texas.

C. Small school programs will vary according to the local situation if they offer maximum educational opportunity.

D. Small schools, even more than large schools, must share staff and services with other schools.

Organization and Procedures

Policy formulation and planning will be by the Small Schools Advisory Commission and the Texas Education Agency. (It may be necessary to designate a Steering Committee.)

The Project Coordinator will serve as the Executive Officer of the State Committee. He will direct state-wide planning and evaluation, supervise project staffs, disseminate information, and give overall direction to the Project.

Consultants provided by the Agency, cooperating County and District Superintendents, and colleges and universities, will assist in preparation of publications, the development of materials, and will work with participating schools, conferences and workshops. The consultants will advise with the coordinator in giving direction to the Project.

Details of the activities for program improvement will be developed and carried on by local school staffs with the assistance of a Regional Committee. The Project procedures common to all participating schools will include the following:

A. Five regions will be selected over the State. Each region will include an area composed of communities with similar cultural, economic and geographic characteristics.

B. Within each region, two or three small twelve-grade schools will be selected by the Advisory Commission from among those that submit project proposals and manifest a willingness to participate in the Project.

C. A Committee will be organized for each region to advise individual schools, coordinate the common elements of the projects within schools, and to disseminate information.

Membership of this Committee may include the administrator, a board member, a teacher, and a lay citizen from each participating school, representatives from county superintendents' staffs, and colleges or universities.

D. Each participating school district would plan and execute with the assistance of the Regional Committee, a study of the local community and an evaluation of the total school program. These studies should serve as the basis for program revision, which might include

- Experimentation in the development and use of new or different ways of organizing the school program, including staff and building utilization
- Experimentation with coordinated services shared by two or more schools
- Preparation of special materials to guide the teacher and the student
- Utilization of community resources
- Other promising practices.

During and after the community survey and program evaluation in each participating school, in-service programs will be developed for the purpose of planning and implementing specific program revisions. These revisions will be tailored to local needs and may include consideration of

1. Multiple classes
2. Supervised correspondence study
3. Cooperative service program, including shared teachers, team teaching, equipment and materials, and supervision
4. School aides
5. Flexible scheduling
6. Audio-Visual and other materials programs

TECHNIQUES TO BE EXPLORED

A. Multiple Classes. The traditional pattern of school organization is for teachers to meet with pupils studying the same subject. In multiple class organization, a teacher may be working with two or more groups of students taking different but related courses in one room at the same time. Another situation might be one in which one group is engaged in a regularly scheduled course, while another group is engaged in supervised correspondence studies.

The area of multiple classes is one of several closely related areas in which the Project proposes to develop and use methods and organization adapted to small group learning. The development of multiple classes necessitates significant changes in responsibilities of both teacher and student. The basic role of the teacher in the small school is more that of a generalist rather than a subject matter specialist. In multiple classes this means: (1) transferring from teacher to pupils some of the initiative, direction and rate of conducting the learning experiences, and (2) employing modern technological means of communication to supplement oral communication by the teacher to provide information. Pupils working together in small groups will need to depend more on films, slides, records, tapes, displays, and printed guides and less on oral communication. Part of the development of small group learning will be learning how to use such materials.

Teacher Pre-Planning

In every multiple class situation, an orientation period is mandatory and should cover instruction in the skills of organizing work, studying independently, finding resources, and making meaningful summaries or reports. It must include teacher and pupil planning without permitting one to throttle the other.

General Information:

- Multiple classes should be longer than forty-five minutes and the size of the total group should not be more than 20 to 25 students
- No more than two classes, except possibly an additional correspondence class, should be held simultaneously
- Combinations of subjects should be in related fields, e.g., Algebra I - Algebra II; General Science - Biology; Chemistry - Physics; American History - World History.

Multiple class teaching can be carried on effectively and with profit to the students. However, to do so requires careful planning in terms of the ability, interest, knowledge, skill and dedication of the teacher. It will require a continuous examination of the pupils' needs, interests and welfare, and a consideration of available facilities and resources.

B. Supervised Correspondence Study. Correspondence courses supplement local school offerings in order to meet special needs of students. The school authorities should give special attention to the selection of such courses and provide a regular classroom atmosphere for students who are taking the courses.

The correspondence center prepares and provides the course materials and a specialized teacher who corrects papers and advises the pupil by mail.

Correspondence courses offer a means of providing for individual or limited group academic curricular needs. However, correspondence courses are not a panacea and there are many problems peculiar to correspondnece course work with which the supervising teacher should familiarize herself prior to participating in this program.

In planning a correspondence program consideration should be given to these items:

- Correspondnece courses should be used when the school does not have a qualified or certified teacher to offer the course.

- It is justifiable to ask the individual and his parent to post with proper school officials the cost of the initial correspondence unit, with the understanding that this fee will be returned when the student completes the course.

- Correspondence courses should be adapted to multiple class teaching.

- Correspondnece work in some instances does not provide adequately for student drill. The teacher must accept the responsibility of providing for this need.

- School administrators and individual teachers supervising correspondence study should survey non-school lay personnel in the community who are in a position to assist in advisement, assist in instruction of a technical nature, and evaluate and criticize student efforts in the correspondnece program.

- Instructors conducting multiple class correspondence units should set periodic "deadline due dates."

As interest grows in the use of correspondence courses as a means of expanding the curricular offering of the small school, consideration should be given to ways and means of making correspondence courses more applicable to multiple classes.

C. Cooperative Service Programs offer an opportunity for two or more schools to broaden their educational programs by sharing teachers, supervisors, equipment, materials, etc. Such shared service programs are usually arranged by and operate under the county superintendent.

This Project proposes to experiment with the development and use of such services within the local school insofar as the small group process will contribute to increasing their effectiveness. By means of Cooperative Service Programs that groups of schools can work out among themselves, pupils in small schools can have the same wide variety of educational opportunities and services that girls and boys everywhere need. If a group of local school districts in a county team up, they can effectively provide for themselves specialized services (1) that are not needed daily; (2) for which there is too little demand to require full-

time specialists; and (3) that would cost too much for any one school to carry for the number of pupils so served.

D. School Aides. In order to provide a comprehensive program, the small school should use every possible method to best utilize its teaching staff. One possible solution might be the use of school aides--non-certificated local citizens employed to relieve the teacher of routine duties.

Teachers need more time to do better the main job they are trained and equipped to do--help pupils learn. Where and how are teachers going to get the time they need? One answer might be to obtain some competent adults to do the routine chores. Some schools may be able to secure the services of local persons on a voluntary basis, while others may find it necessary to hire such persons.

Many time consuming tasks these persons may do are:

Attendance - taking and reporting

Collecting funds and record-keeping;

Transferring grades from the teacher's record book to the permanent record cards;

Making out routine administrative reports;

Typing stencils and operating duplicating machines;

Monitoring in school corridors, cafeterias, study halls, and playgrounds;

Preparing rooms and equipment for showing films and filmstrips;

Clipping, mounting, and filing related items.

There are many school aides at work in many schools today. Where they are on the job, teachers have more time to help individual pupils, more time to keep in touch with parents, and more time for lesson planning and developing learning materials.

E. Flexible Schedules offer the opportunity for a variety of patterns which may be developed to fit the need of the individual school. These scheduling patterns may include the use of college type schedules; the horizontal and vertical patterns of scheduling; and solid time blocks.

There is need to provide for more flexibility in the instructional program of small high schools. Emerging in some small schools are

- Longer periods scheduled four times a week instead of five
- Rotating periods that give each class more opportunity to meet at optimum learning times of the school day
- Morning and afternoon schedules that are interchanged every two weeks.

Although there is no single answer to the scheduling problems of small high schools, the use of flexible schedules will enable schools to experiment with various programs designed to fit their needs.

F. Audio-Visual and Other Materials. Consideration should be given to further use of suitable films, tapes and other types of audio-visual equipment to relieve the teacher or enrich the teacher's personal presentation. Special study should be given to more effective use of various materials and equipment. This would be of particular benefit where teachers are working with multiple classes.

Evaluation Procedures

Evidence of the outcomes of this Small Schools Project would be systematically gathered throughout the five-year period. Base-line data would be provided by the community surveys and the school program evaluations required of all participating schools in the first year. A systematic testing program would be developed, in-

corporating existing testing, but assuring a basic common core of test data on achievement, attitudes, interest, personal adjustment, etc.

Teacher characteristics, as reflected in classroom practices, would be assessed early in the Project and at the end of it, by systematic observation techniques and instruments. Follow-up drop-out studies would be carried on continuously.

Cases describing each phase of the evolving projects would be developes, based on careful logs of events maintained by the Coordinator, Regional Committees, consultants and participating schools.

Terminal evaluation would involve studies of communities and evaluations of programs. Self-evaluation and visiting observer team approaches would both be employed.